



The Child's Family

The environment of the family, including parents' physical and mental health and the activities that go on at home, provide the backdrop and context for children's health and development. Therefore, the survey explored a number of aspects of the family, including shared activities (such as reading to young children, shared meals, and attending religious services) as well as risk factors (such as smoking in the household, parenting aggravation, and the health status of the child's mother). These indicators provide a picture of some of the factors that can influence children's health and well-being.



Reading to Young Children

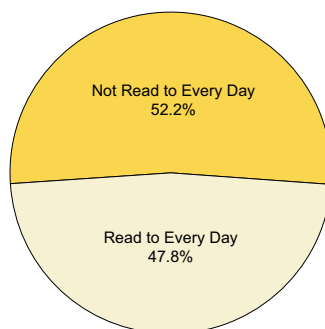
Reading to young children regularly can lay the foundation for future literacy and educational success. Parents of children aged 0-5 were asked whether their children were read to every day in the week before the survey. A total of 47.8 percent of children in this age group are read to (by a parent or other caregiver) every day.

The likelihood that young children are read to every day rises with the education level of their parents. Of children of parents with less than a high school education, 30.6 percent are read to every day, as are 39.2 percent of children whose parents have a high school diploma. Of children of parents with more than a high school education, more than half (53.5 percent) were read to every day.

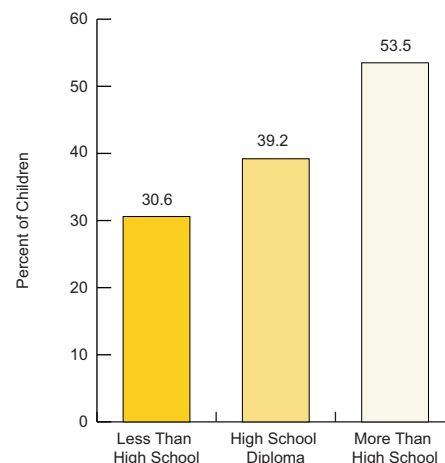
The rate of reading to young children also rises with income. Just over one-third (36.4 percent) of children with family incomes below the poverty level are read to every day, compared to 43.6 percent of children with family incomes between 100 and 199 percent of poverty. Of children with family incomes between 200 and 399 percent of FPL, half (50.1 percent) are read to every day, as are 58.9 percent of children in higher-income families.

Families in different racial and ethnic groups also differ in the likelihood of reading to their young

Reading to Children Aged 0-5 Years



Percent of Children Aged 0-5 Years Who are Read to Every Day, by Parent's Education Level



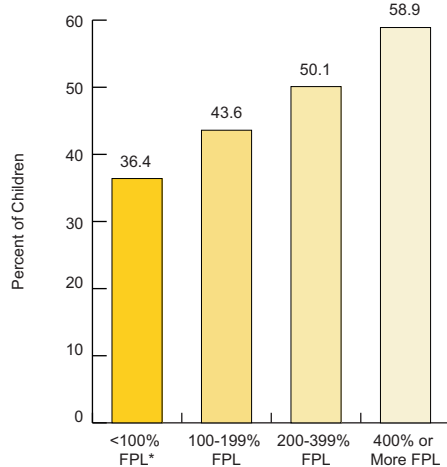
children. More than half of White (55.0 percent) and multiracial children (51.8 percent) are read to every day, compared to 38.1 percent of Black children, 33.4 percent of Hispanic children, and 46.4 percent of children of other races.

Young children who live with both of their biological or adoptive parents are more likely to be read to than

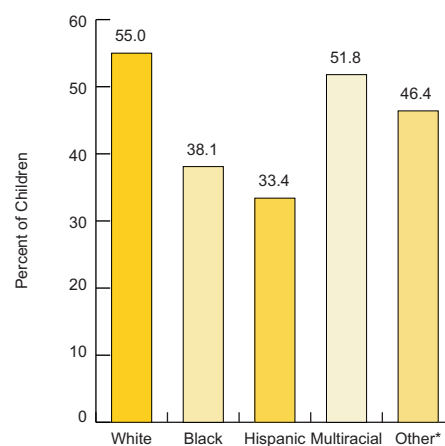
those with other family structures. Of children who live with both parents, 50.2 percent are read to every day, compared to 43.0 percent of children who live in a two-parent step-family and 41.1 percent of children who live with single mothers.



Percent of Children Aged 0-5 Years Who Are Read to Every Day, by Family Income

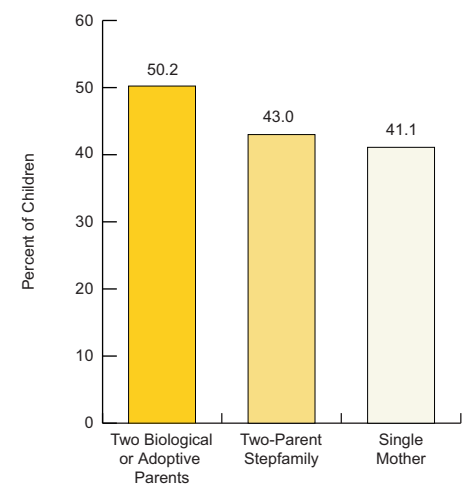


Percent of Children Aged 0-5 Years Who Are Read to Every Day, by Race and Ethnicity



*Includes Asian/Pacific Islander and American Indian/Alaska Native children.

Percent of Children Aged 0-5 Years Who are Read to Every Day, by Family Structure



*Federal Poverty Level, equal to \$18,400 for a family of four in 2003.





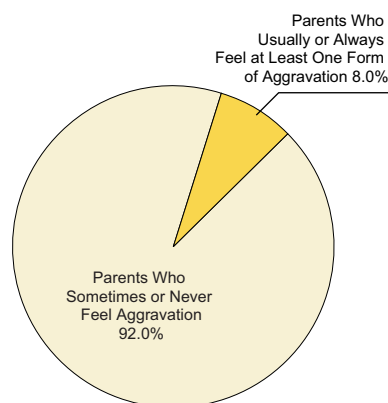
Parenting Aggravation

The demands of parenting can cause considerable aggravation for families. Parents were asked how often during the past month they had felt that their child was much harder to care for than others of his or her age; how often the child did things that really bothered them a lot; and how often they had felt angry with the child. Overall, parents of 8.0 percent of children answered “usually” or “always” to at least one of these measures of parenting aggravation.

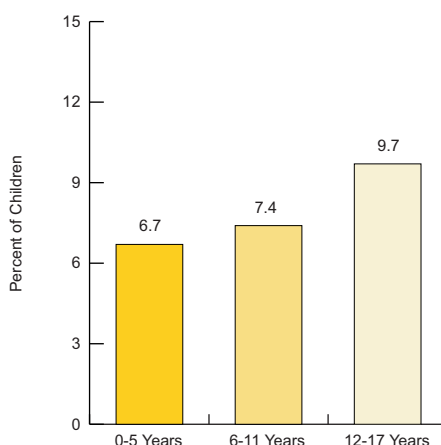
Levels of aggravation appear to be higher among parents of older children. While the parents of only 6.7 percent of children aged 0-5 reported high levels of aggravation, the parents of 7.4 percent of 6- to 11-year-olds and 9.7 percent of 12- to 17-year-olds met the standard for parenting aggravation.

Lower family income is also associated with higher levels of parenting aggravation. Among children with family incomes below the poverty level, the parents of 13.6 percent reported high levels of aggravation, compared to parents of 9.1 percent of children with family incomes between 100 and 199 percent of poverty. Of children with family incomes between 200 and 399 percent of FPL, the parents of 6.1 percent report high aggravation levels, as do parents of 5.3 percent of children with family incomes of 400 percent of FPL or more.

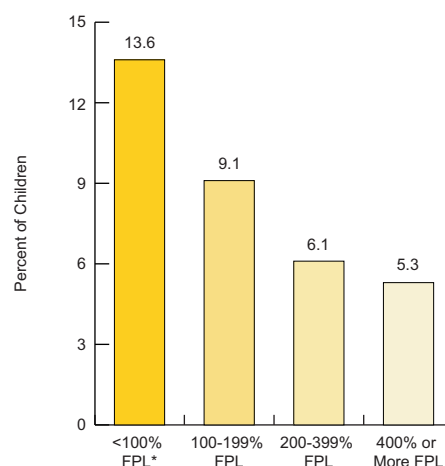
Aggravation with Child



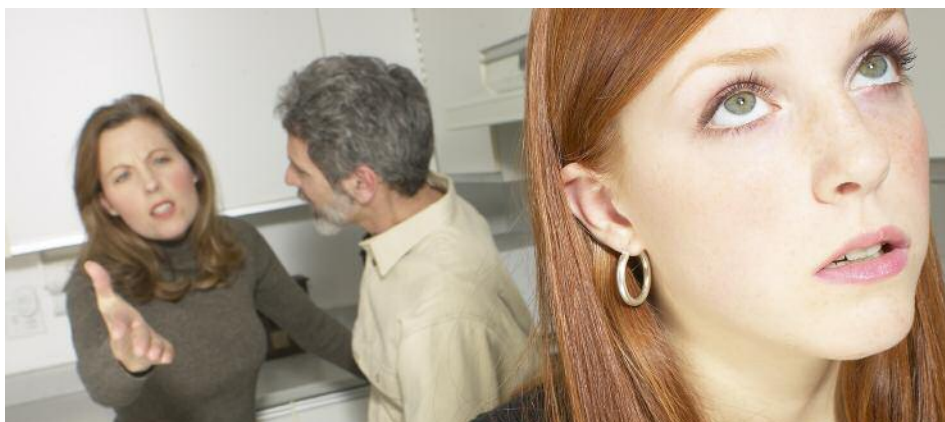
Percent of Children Whose Parents Are Usually or Always Aggravated, by Child's Age



Percent of Children Whose Parents Are Usually or Always Aggravated, by Family Income



*Federal Poverty Level, equal to \$18,400 for a family of four in 2003.





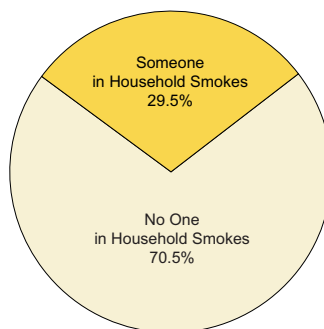
Smoking in the Household

Exposure to environmental smoke—from cigarettes, cigars, or pipes—can be a serious health hazard for children. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, exposure to secondhand smoke is associated with higher rates of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), asthma, bronchitis, and pneumonia in young children.⁶ Parents were asked whether anyone in the household used cigarettes, cigars, or pipe tobacco. Overall, 29.5 percent of children live in households where someone smokes.

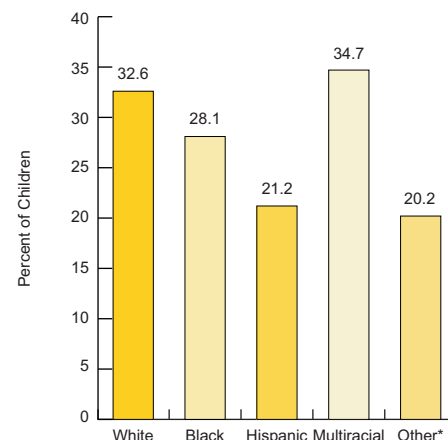
Just over one-third of multiracial children (34.7 percent) live in households where someone smokes, as do 32.6 percent of White children. Rates of household smoking among other racial and ethnic groups are lower: 28.1 percent of Black children, 21.2 percent of Hispanic children, and 20.2 percent of children of other races live in households with a smoker.

Rates of household smoking decline as income increases. Of children with family incomes below the poverty level, 38.5 percent live in a household with a smoker, as do 36.5 percent of children with family incomes between 100 and 199 percent of poverty. Of children with family incomes between 200 and 399 percent of FPL, 29.6 percent live with a smoker, and of children with family incomes of 400 percent of FPL or more, only 19 percent have a smoker in the household.

Children Living in Households with a Smoker

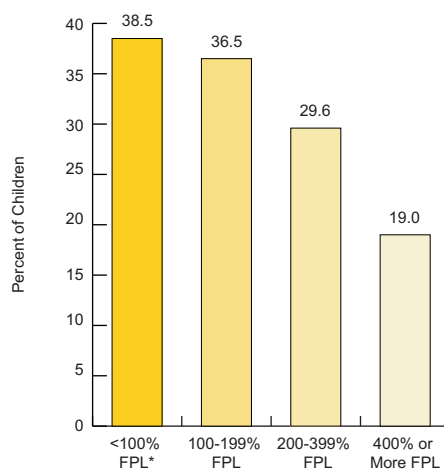


Percent of Children Living in Households with a Smoker, by Race and Ethnicity



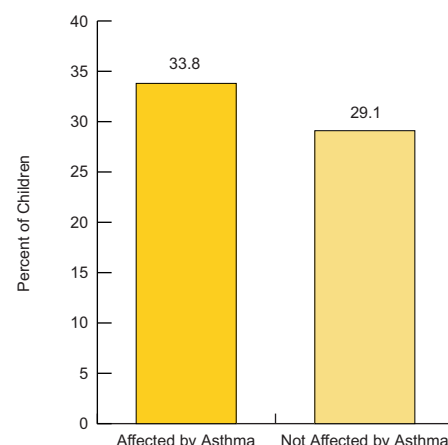
*Includes Asian/Pacific Islander and American Indian/Alaska Native children.

Percent of Children Living in Households with a Smoker, by Family Income



*Federal Poverty Level, equal to \$18,400 for a family of four in 2003.

Percent of Children Living in Households with a Smoker, by Asthma Status



Children who are affected by asthma (that is, those who currently have asthma, take prescription drugs for asthma, have had a moderate or severe asthma attack in the past year, or who have been hospitalized in the past year for asthma) are more likely to live in a home with a smoker than those who are not affected by asthma (those who do not currently have

asthma or who have had none of the above consequences in the past year). Of children who are affected by asthma, 33.8 percent live in a home with a smoker, compared to 29.1 percent of children who are not affected by asthma.

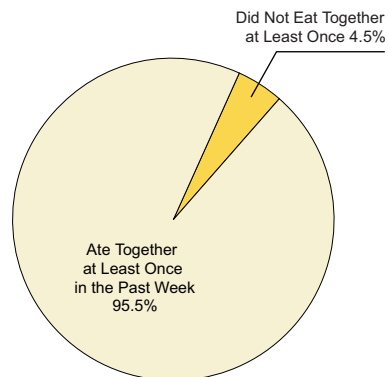


Sharing Meals

Eating together as a family can promote both family bonding and good nutrition. Overall, the parents of 95.5 percent of children report that their families ate together on at least one day during the previous week, and those that did eat together did so on an average of 5 days in the week before the survey.

In general, the likelihood of sharing meals and the number of shared meals per week does not vary substantially by sociodemographic categories.

Children Sharing Meals with Their Families





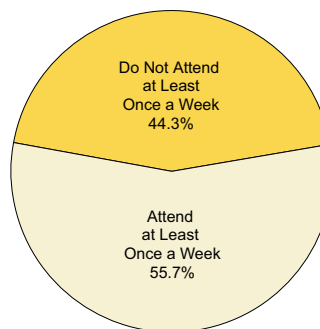
Religious Services

Attendance at religious services is another activity that families can do together and can involve children in the broader community. Overall, the parents of 55.7 percent of children report that their children attend religious services at least once a week.

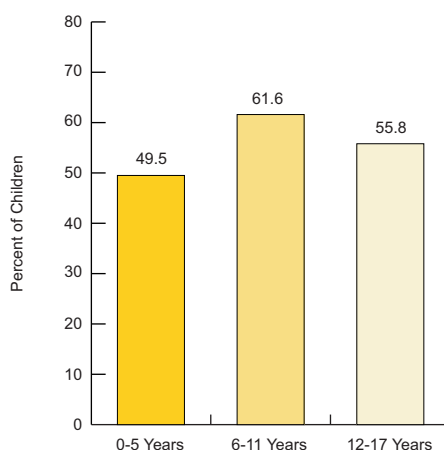
Children in the middle age group are the most likely to attend religious services weekly or more often. While fewer than half (49.5 percent) of children aged 0-5 attend religious services at least weekly, 61.6 percent of children aged 6-11 do so. Of adolescents aged 12-17, 55.8 percent are reported to attend services at least weekly.

Attendance at religious services also varies by race and ethnicity. Black children are the most likely to attend religious services at least weekly (63.9 percent do so), followed by Hispanic children (58.3 percent). Of White children, 53.9 percent attend services each week, as do 46.2 percent of multiracial children and 49.6 percent of children of other races.

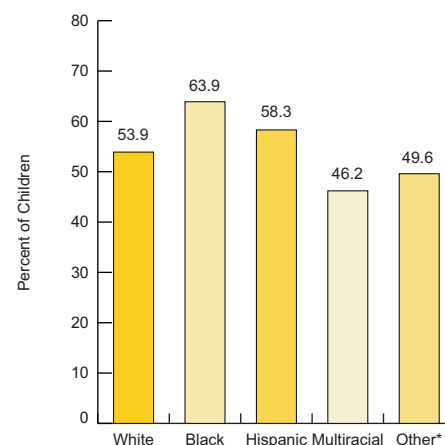
Children's Attendance at Religious Services



Percent of Children Attending Religious Services Weekly or More, by Age



Percent of Children Attending Religious Services Weekly or More, by Race and Ethnicity



*Includes Asian/Pacific Islander and American Indian/Alaska Native children.



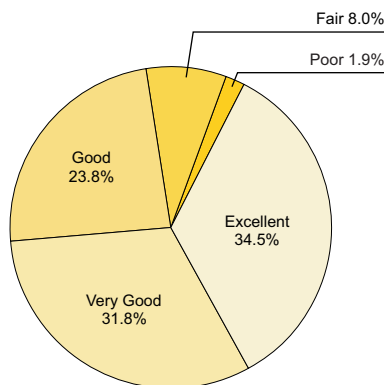


Mothers' Health Status

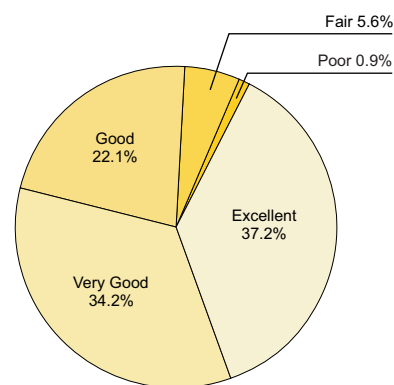
The physical and emotional health of a child's mother can affect her ability to care for her children and can influence the health and well-being of the family as a whole. Overall, the mothers of 58.9 percent of children rate both their physical and emotional health as "excellent" or "very good." The mothers of two thirds of children (66.3 percent) report that their physical health is excellent or very good. The percentage of children whose mothers' mental health is excellent or very good is slightly higher (71.4 percent).

Mothers' physical and emotional health improves with increased income. While the mothers of only 34.3 percent of children with family incomes below the poverty level report excellent or very good health, mothers of more than half (48.8 percent) of children with family incomes between 100 and 199 percent of poverty report this level of health. Of children with family incomes between 200 and 399 percent of FPL, 65.8 percent have mothers who report excellent or very good health, as do the mothers of 76.6 percent of children with family incomes of 400 percent of FPL or more.

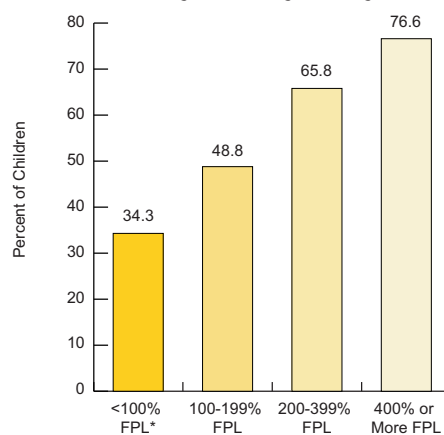
Physical Health Status of Children's Mothers



Emotional Health Status of Children's Mothers



Percent of Children with Mothers Whose Physical and Emotional Health Are Excellent or Very Good, by Family Income



*Federal Poverty Level, equal to \$18,400 for a family of four in 2003.

